

# Annual video-tape extravaganza stresses women's point of view **video playback**

BY ROY PINNEY

Video tape seems destined to become the newest art form to articulate the inner spirit of our time. More and more women are turning to this responsive and flexible vehicle of self-expression, judging from the Second Annual Women's Video Festival held in the Kitchen Theatre of the LoGiudice Gallery in New York.

Many women have become tired of what they view as the female stereotypes constantly presented on television and in the movies. Video technology has developed as a contemporary of the "women's consciousness" movement. And so, women have been attracted to this new medium, viewing it as an opportunity to participate on an equal footing with men's right from the beginning of its development.

Another consideration: compared to a movie documentary, video tape is inexpensive. A reel of one half-hour tape can be bought for as little as about \$10, and recycled after its initial use. The cost of the basic video unit—camera, deck, and power adapter—can be well under \$2,000, as readers of this column know.

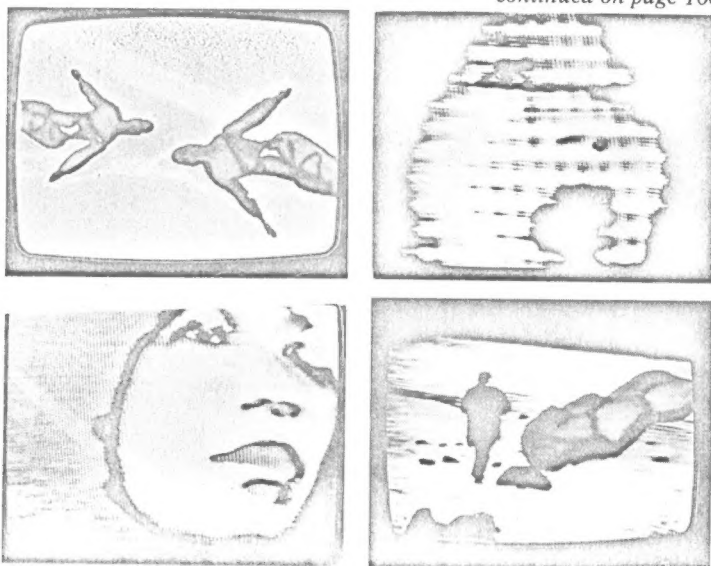
Video tape has, of course, been used on commercial television for over 20 years. But there are different gauges of tape. Regular broadcast tape is two in. wide, and is the only type normally allowed by federal regulations over commercial air waves.

The tapes now being used by those attracted to the medium are quarter- and half-in. The equipment is much more portable and inexpensive than their two-in. counterparts. The half-in. tape, which is shown via closed-circuit TV, was originally produced as a consumer item but soon found favor on the professional level as well.

Until about two years ago, the creator of a subject on video tape was most likely to only exhibit the piece to friends on an informal basis. But then, two video fans, Woody and Steina Vasulka, began to utilize the visual designs and effects possible with tape on a purely "art" basis. They opened a small theater to exhibit their own material, and then expanded to provide a showcase for producers of all sorts of video tapes—a pioneering undertaking.

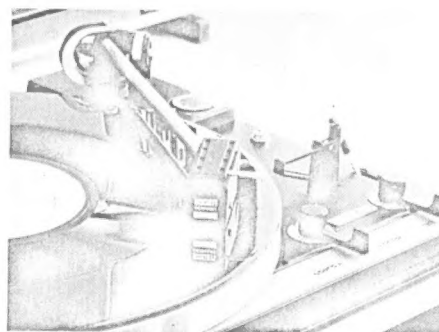
About this time the first Women's Video Festival was organized, followed by a second one made possible by grants from the New York State Council on the Arts and the Women's Interart Center. Produced in a large loft in New York City's Soho district, bare except for bridge

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Tape scenes, shot off TV screen by Lin Ehrlich, are from S. Klein's "Watermill" (top l.); S. Kubota's "Video Girls & Video Songs for Navajo Sky" (top r., bottom l.); S. and W. Vasulka's "Golden Voyage."

## Enter: two new types of TV disks



MDR: The inner grooves guide the pick-up

Video watchers who think they've seen and heard it all may have a surprise coming: two more types of disks—one which would even permit home recording! Unlike the laser-beam reflection designs of Philips and MCA, or the grooves used by the Teldec player, the MDR Rabe system uses a magnetic-coated disk. However, an inner band of this disk is spirally grooved. The player's pickup, bearing the magnetic record/playback head, has an extension with a needle. The disk's grooves, with the needle riding in them, guide the head's scanning—a most ingenious concept.

The system is claimed to be compatible with conventional hi-fi audio players, requiring only the substitution of the magnetic-head pick-up, with built-in preamplifier, and the addition of the recording/playback amplifier for operation with any b&w or color TV set. As with any video-tape recorder, the user could copy programs off the air, or shoot his own with a video camera.

At present, the player must be run at 156 rpm, but the designers expect to halve this to a standard 78 rpm. TV recording capacity is foreseen as 12 minutes per side; this might be doubled in dupes. Recording and playback of multichannel audio, at 33 1/3 rpm, is also considered possible.

One word of caution: while the system has been demonstrated in Germany, it is still only in the developmental stage.

About that second new disk: recorded on photographic film by laser, it's for playback only, to be read with a photodiode. It's a concept of i/o Metrics of Sunnyvale, Ca., who predict a player for \$300, and a disk, good for a half-hour of color TV, for \$5. But they are not planning to manufacture either themselves.

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chairs, floor cushions, some huge plants, and over a dozen television sets, the festival has been drawing close to 500 people per week.

For both festivals, a policy of nonselectivity has been maintained. The only criterion has been that each tape be conceived and produced by women. This is to be an opportunity for any woman to show her tape and get some critical feedback. The tapes, therefore, range from the professional to the barely amateur, from excellent to unbelievably bad.

Last year, most of the tapes came from the New York City area. An effort was made this year, however, to gather material from across the country. About 250 letters were sent out to universities, magazines and journals in the field, etc., and the tapes just came "pouring in," according to Susan Milano, the chief coordinator of the festival. Extra afternoon showings were scheduled to accommodate the 53 tapes on view this year.

The tapes do not all deal with "women's issues," but range over a wide variety of topics and illustrate as many different points of view. Included are documentaries, video poems, art and dance compositions. Ms. Milano expects the festival to assert more selectivity over the quality of the tapes presented next year, as she feels there are enough tapes being produced, and that the public demands some quality control.

Some of the presentations were simply horrendous; subject matter, if any, remained a mystery. Others made one wince at the lack of craftsmanship because of the misuse of a technological tool, including ignorance of focusing a zoom lens, improperly hand-holding the camera, too much panning, etc.; but most were very worthwhile, providing insights of sociological importance and other means of self-expression that often titillate, surprise, or shock.

Jacqueline Pearl's "Christine" showed a male dressed up as a female and his adventures in the street. Louise and Bill Etra's "Narcisicon" computer-animated presentation was particularly professionally controlled and imaginative; Susan Mogul's "Dressing Up" was a delightful spoof on the addiction of many women to shopping for bargains in clothes. "The Priest and the Pilot" by Video Workshop focused on two women who, rejecting the traditional mode of housewife and mother, chose careers outside the home: one as a deacon (with the hope of eventually becoming a priest) in the Episcopal Church, and the other as a helicopter pilot. Doris Chase's "Calin Hampton-Calvary Church" was a 30-minute presentation of a well-known organist's recital who specializes in creating sculpture forms for modern dance, using her kinetic creations in numerous films that have attracted the attention of the dance world.

Other tapes shown were Ripp/Brown's "Sexual Fantasy Party," a funny commentary in the form of a costume party depict-

ing our sexual attitudes today; a gripping documentary by Denver/Redom of London entitled "The Streets of Ulster," showing the emotional intensity of the conflict going on in Ireland; and a charming five-minute showing of "Videopoems" by Tsuno/Maruyama. Only women were invited to the Sunday programs which showed "Sister Silver Sings" by Heischman; "Another Look" by LOVE Group; "I am a Woman" by Sibert Williams; and "National Lesbian Conference April '73" by a team calling themselves Vulva Video!

Where do the video tapes go after the festival? Some are distributed to galleries; others are shown by colleges, women's interest groups, and community centers. Also available for use by cable TV, so far few have been broadcast. According to Ms. Milano, the opportunities for using and exhibiting the tapes are "few and far between, but slowly advancing." ●